

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ARA-16 ISO-00 EURE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07

H-03 INR-11 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01

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P 261755Z SEP 74

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2695

INFO AMCONSUL BORDEAUX

AMCONSUL LYON

AMCONSUL NICE

AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

AMCONSUL MARSEILLE

AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE

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E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, FR

SUBJECT: FRENCH BY-ELECTIONS' SEPTEMBER 29' 1974

SUMMARY: FIVE FORMER MINISTERS AND ONE SECRETARY OF STATE IN THE LAST TWO POMPIDOU GOVERNMENTS WILL BE ATTEMPTING TO REGAIN THEIR SEATS IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY THIS SUNDAY' SEPTEMBER 29. THEIR SUCCESS OR FAILURE WILL CONSTITUTE THE FIRST CLEAR ELECTORAL TEST OF MAJORITY COALITION STRENGTH AND COHESION SINCE GISCARD'S ELECTION LAST MAY. IT WILL ALSO PROVIDE A MEASURE OF THE GAULLISTS' STAYING POWER, THE EFFECT OF ECONOMIC CONCERNS AND AGRICULTURAL MALAISE ON FRENCH VOTERS, AND THE IMPACT OF THE 18-YEAR-OLD VOTE ON ELECTORAL PATTERNS. END SUMMARY.

1. IN WHAT MAY PROVE TO BE THE LAST ELECTION OF ITS KIND, SIX FORMER CABINET MEMBERS WHO SERVED IN THE TWO POMPIDOU GOVERNMENTS BETWEEN THE LEGISLATIVE

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ELECTIONS OF MARCH 1973 AND POMPIDOU'S DEATH LAST

APRIL ARE ATTEMPTING TO REGAIN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SEATS THEY RELINQUISHED WHEN THEY ACCEPTED CABINET POSTS. IF, AS SEEMS LIKELY, A CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT NOW PENDING PASSES THE ASSEMBLY LATER THIS FALL PARLIAMENTARY SUBSTITUTES (SUPPLEANTS) WILL BE REQUIRED TO YIELD THEIR SEATS TO FORMER MINISTERS AND SECRETARIES OF STATE WITHIN SIX MONTHS WHEN THEY STEP DOWN -- AS IS NOT NOW THE CASE.

2. THE SIX EX-CABINET MEMBERS UP FOR RE-ELECTION TO THEIR FORMER SEATS THIS SUNDAY (WITH RUNOFF ELECTIONS TO BE HELD OCTOBER 6 IF NECESSARY) ARE LISTED BELOW, ALONG LOCATED:

-- PIERRE MESSMER (UDR), FORMER PRIME MINISTER; MOSELLE

-- OLIVIER GUICHARD (UDR), FORMER MINISTER OF STATE FOR TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT, EQUIPMENT AND HOUSING; LOIRE-ATLANTIQUE

-- JOSEPH FONTANET (CDP), FORMER MINISTER OF EDUCATION; SAVOIE

-- YVES GUENA (UDR), FORMER MINISTER OF TRANSPORT, THEN MINISTER OF INDUSTRY, COMMERCE AND SMALL BUSINESS; DORDOGNE

-- JEAN-PHILIPPE LECAT (UDR/"NEW MAJORITY"), FORMER MINISTER OF EDUCATION; COTE-D'OR

-- HENRI TORRE (UDR), FORMER SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCIENTIFIC AND INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT, THEN SECRETARY OF STATE FOR BUDGET; ARDECHE

3. THREE OF THE SIX CANDIDATES CAN EXPECT FAIRLY EASY SLEDDING. MESSMER, GUICHARD AND TORRE HAVE HISTORICALLY WON EASY VICTORIES ON THE FIRST ROUND. FOR FONTANET GUENA AND LECAT, THE GOING WILL CERTAINLY PROVE ROUGHER, ALTHOUGH AT THIS POINT THE CHANCES ARE FAIR THAT THEY

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TOO WILL SQUEEZE THROUGH.

4. SIGNIFICANTLY, THE PARTIES OF THE PRESIDENTIAL MAJORITY HAVE IN ALL SIX INSTANCES BEEN ABLE TO RECONCILE THEIR DIFFERENCES -- IN SEVERAL CASES CONSIDERABLE --AND RALLY TO THE SUPPORT OF THE EX-CABINET MEMBERS. HOWEVER, THE FACT THAT THERE ARE COMMUNIST-VERSUS-SOCIALIST CONFRONTATIONS IN FOUR OF THE SIX DISTRICTS SHOULD NOT BE READ AS A SIGN OF DISINTEGRATION ON THE LEFT; RATHER' BOTH THE PC AND PS FEEL OBLIGED TO PRESENT CANDIDATES IN ORDER TO PRESERVE THEIR CREDIBILITY IN THE FACE OF UPCOMING FALL CONGRESSES.

5. PRESS, PARTIES AND PUBLIC ALIKE ARE WATCHING THIS SUNDAY'S BALLOTING WITH CONSIDERABLE INTEREST. EACH OF THE SIX DISTRICTS HAS A DIFFERENT "MIX" OF POLITICAL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AND ECONOMIC CONCERNS; EIGHTEEN-YEAR-OLDS WILL BE VOTING FOR THE FIRST TIME; AND AGRICULTURAL MALAISE IS A FACTOR IN ALL SIX DEPARTMENTS. GIVEN THE OBVIOUS PRESTIGE OF THE MAJORITY CANDIDATES, THE ELECTION WILL INEVITABLY BE CONSIDERED A YARDSTICK OF ELECTCRAL SUPPORT FOR THE GISCARDIAN MAJORITY.
IRWIN

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